DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 197 432 EA 013 251

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TITLE Evaluator-Administrator Relationships. Evaluation Services Department Report.
INSTITUTION San Diego City Schools, Calif.
PUB DATE Nov 80
NOTE 10p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the California Educational Research Association (San Mateo, CA, November 20-21, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role: Elementary Secondary Education: Evaluation Needs: *Evaluators: Government School Relationship: Interprofessional Relationship: Job Skills: Principals: *Program Evaluation

ABSTRACT

The issue raised by this paper is whether the site administrator needs to have formal evaluation skills. These skills are not necessary when there is a competent administrator and a competent evaluator who uses his or her skills within the context of a harmonious relationship with the school staff. However, the rarity of such a relationship, coupled with growing state demands for evaluation of categorically funded programs, indicates that today's principal needs to have some knowledge of the field of evaluation. There are a minimum of ten basic areas that the administrator should have a detailed knowledge of: evaluation design, needs assessment, goal setting, objectives, sampling techniques, philosophy of evaluation, student progress, testing, computer printouts, and record keeping. In addition to the desirability of a harmonious working relationship between evaluator and administrator, public schools would profit from those in decision-making positions having some certification that would document their ability to relate effectively on evaluation issues. (Author/JK)

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ED197432

San Diego City Schools

EVALUATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT REPORT

EVALUATOR - ADMINISTRATOR RELATIONSHIPS

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California Educational Research Association Conference
San Mateo, November 1980

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EA 013 251

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EVALUATOR - ADMINISTRATOR RELATIONSHIPS

It has often been observed by program evaluators that a large number of the operating staffs of schools (e.g., those principals and other administrators who have been in the system for a large number of years) are without the requisite skills to understand and develop educational program evaluation. In earlier years, there may have been no necessity for those individuals to understand evaluation or even be cognizant of a few basic rudiments of the art, or as some evaluators hope, will soon be recognized as a profession.

In recent years, a majority of large and small public school systems in the United States have been a party to or have been recipients of federal or state funding for special programs in the schools. This automatically dictates a mandate for evaluation. Evaluation in itself should be a vital part of the instructional process, which of course in the final analysis is dedicated to the enhancement of the educational well being of the children entrusted to the system. Program directors and/or principals probably are not sufficiently aware of what evaluation is. As a matter of fact, neither teachers nor principals, historically, have been previously employed in evaluation or are skilled at it, and perhaps we might ask why should they be?

> "Many teachers and administrators obviously are not managerial in their orientation and are afraid to engage in what they fundamentally believe education to be. Otherwise they would not spend as much time as they do turning out what can only be considered to be nuts and bolts produced according to technological specifications."[1]

Principals and/or project directors usually have not been trained in evaluation; however, it is reasonable to assume that it would be desirable that those persons occupying leadership positions in public education have at least minimal amount of this training in their background, whether it be in teacher education, graduate work, or in-service training, to at least acquaint them with the basics in three or four key areas of evaluation. Too often, the school principal delegates evaluation responsibilities to another person at his site. Too often, also, the district evaluator is content to have minimal contact with the project director-principal.

> "I need to point only to the use of paraprofessionals in large urban systems to indicate what I mean. The term suggests that the system itself is being cautiously extended to include a few people without the traditional certification. My observations have taught me that the ones they have brought into the system

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[1] Shimahara, N. (ed.), Educational Reconstruction, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1973.

have had the juice of life squeezed from them. Instead of being able to develop new educational approaches on their own or to make use of their own experiences in setting up creative learning centers they are cut off from their peers and made to serve as agents of the experts in charge. Inevitably, they take on the coloration of professionalism and become more and more cautious the longer they work with those they think of as superiors. They begin to resemble some of the union leaders in that their loyalty is offered mainly to the structure of the system: they cease to be accountable to either the children or the community."[2]

The observation of those in the field is often that precisely the above is true. The administrators are quite often cut off from the mainstream of what it is they are all about; namely, the education, the quality education, of children. The advancement of their own careers is a very human trait, but it does often lead them to divest their loyalties to the children, the school, and the community, and direct this loyalty to the structure of the system and their own possible advancement within it. The problem then is, it is perceived in the field that there are in all probability a good number, perhaps even a majority, of site administrators or project directors who are (1) not abreast of even the basic fundamentals of evaluation; (2) perhaps may not be interested in these fundamentals, but may be more interested in the advancement of their own careers. Both of the above are conditions that are to be expected in the contemporary scene. However, it is postulated that the public educational system would be well enhanced with those in decision-making positions having as a very minimal experience one or two courses in their basic training related to evaluation; better yet, to have some sort of certification at a point in their professional careers which would document the necessary expertise, or at least limited expertise, for them to relate effectively on evaluation issues to the program evaluator, to the staff of their schools, to the parents and the general public to which all of us in public education are ultimately responsible.

Program Evaluations Skills Required for Educational Leadership

In the first case we describe a particular situation in which the principal of a school played a key role in the evaluation/decision-making process over a period of three years. In this instance, a school district in California during the early 1970s created what was then a new and innovative idea, a career education high school. This school was known as the Harry S. Truman Career Education High School. Like other schools in the Hillside Unified School District, Truman High School fell under the supervision of the secondary schools division, but as elsewhere in the district, the responsibilities for general operations at the site level were delegated to the site principal. There were no special district regulations pertaining to Truman's career program despite its origin in the district offices. The then principal of the school said "the school district relationship is one of agreeable remoteness." Therefore, taking this statement into account, it was incumbent upon the principal to run her school

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[2]Shimahara, N. (ed.), op. cit.

in a partial vacuum (this was a rare instance where a woman was assigned as principal of a predominately male-oriented activity). The principal was in charge of the entire staff and all program activity. She, in turn, was responsible to the secondary school division and periphery to the career education unit.

Because the career program, which was called "outreach," took in the whole school, the principal was also entitled Title IV-C Project Director. At the time of this particular case study, Title IV-C was one of the federal government's main sources of funding for special projects in education. As such, a requirement for evaluation was a vital part of acceptance of these federal funds. The role played by Mrs. Johnson, the principal of the school, was no more than a reflection of her institutional position. She was solely responsible for the course of study and the staff at Truman. In addition, she was the point of contact between the school and the district, the community, state, and federal funding services. Mrs. Johnson had spent most of her educational career in Hillside Unified School District at the secondary level as a teacher and as an administrator of both junior high and high schools. She immediately created the impression of a well organized, confident, and thoroughly professional "take charge" kind of person. For Johnson, personal involvement seemed to be the core of her definition of the administrator's role in the school. Rejecting the idea of the principal, the kind of faceless neutral decision maker, receiving information and handing down orders, Helen Johnson insisted on participating in the educational process which took place around her. She left no doubt that hers was the ultimate responsibility when the decision had to be made, but she made it equally clear that such decisions would be based on her numerous personal observations and conversations with the staff and evaluator and a consideration of site personnel, as well as other factors.

Mrs. Johnson's attitude was no more evident than in her work with Dr. Harry Emerson, who was the district evaluator assigned to the school, in the yearly evaluations of Truman High. Mrs. Johnson involved herself directly with the planning and implementation of evaluation procedures, and she served as the chief conduit of evaluative information between Dr. Emerson and the Truman staff. An experienced administrator and thus no stranger to the increasing role of evaluations in public schools, Johnson maintained a balanced view of their real value. She conceded that the results of the norm-referenced state achievement test could be used to improve some aspects of the school program; at the same time, she questioned the emphasis put on those tests, especially considering the amount of time they required. She also saw a lack of test wiseness among students of the lower socio-economic backgrounds common at this particular school, thus perhaps leading to invalid test scores. On the whole, Johnson dealt with program evaluation from a neutral cautious position: "All of the test instruments are as good as the program and the evaluator."

Mrs. Johnson thought that Dr. Emerson and his evaluation of "outreach" were very good indeed. She was particularly pleased with the attention Emerson gave to Truman High School, as exemplified by the number of site visits and his attendance at in-service workshops. She felt that Emerson included her in the important aspects of evaluation and because of this relationship, the evaluation of "outreach" was an asset rather than something about which to be apprehensive. In fact, principal Johnson stated

that as far as she concerned, there was no way the evaluation could have been any better. "Dr. Emerson presented a very fair and very favorable picture of this project and outreach got more than its money's worth from his work." Interestingly enough, though, Johnson also noted that, for her purposes, the "gut level feeling" she got from being at Truman everyday and talking to people was as useful an evaluation as the formal written testing kinds of assessments.

This, then, raises an interesting point. Does the site administrator in fact need to have detailed or even superficial knowledge of evaluation? In the case described, the evaluator himself was an expert in the field of career education and had a reasonable amount of formal evaluation skills. He also had a personality which blended well with site administrators and teachers and largely through this he was able to create an effective process evaluation throughout the three years of his association with the school. Therefore, it is possible in this particular case that evaluation skill on the part of the site administrator was not the important factor. The fact that she was an outstanding administrator within the school system was the important consideration. The fact, also, that the relationship between her and the evaluator was almost symbiotic left little doubt that the evaluation, both process and summative, would be a success. The principal was able to entrust the day-to-day evaluation operation to Dr. Emerson although she required or requested frequent feedback on his findings. However, since, in her eyes, he was perceived as being competent at his craft and she was an extremely able administrator, the two could work together each within an area of expertise, knowing full well that the other person would execute his or her end of the relationship in a professional manner.

In this case, where there was a competent administrator and a competent evaluator trained in a specialty for which the school was designed, there was really no need for the administrator to have specific evaluation skills as long as the evaluator assigned to the school was himself competent in these skills. At the same time, if he had a personality that would lend itself to the utilization of these skills within the context of a harmonious relationship with the school staff, the evaluation would help the program succeed. This is not to say that the principal would not be well advised to have some basic evaluation skills at her grasp, because within the bureaucratic system that employs her, transfers occur almost yearly or within several years to other schools and other situations. The principal in this instance, while she found herself within the hands of a capable evaluator, might find herself two years in the future as a principal of a different school with a different program with a different evaluator and in a situation in which she must have some basic knowledge of what an evaluation is, what statistics are, what test scores are, and certain other tools which are described in the next case.[3]

The second evaluation we describe is of an entirely different project; a different type of project in which evaluation skills on the part of the

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[3]Many of the observations in the Harry S. Truman narrative were taken from: Alkin, M. C., Using Evaluations, Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1979.

site administrator are considered essential. Here, also, the evaluator himself is in a position to influence the decision maker even though the administrator should have some knowledge of evaluation techniques. If evaluators can influence even a few educational decisions so that they turn out well, then this is surely a significant contribution. The prospective evaluators who harbor an image of themselves riding in like a white knight to an evaluation situation where the docile decision maker will meekly follow the evaluator's admonitions need to recognize that is often a fairy-tale view of the world.[4]

Three critical decision points exist in the majority of educational evaluations, since most evaluations are performed for categorically funded programs such as Title I, the federal program to raise the basic skill level of low-achieving youth, or the School Improvement Program, which is a California state-funded activity primarily at the elementary level and is designed to raise the performance of all children in the school. The first decision-making point then is with the federal or state agency which distributed the funds. Here, the evaluation may be divided between formative and summative issues. The state has certain reports it requires and it also often conducts on-site visitations during financial support of the project.

The next level for political decision making is within the district structure itself. If the district employs a competent and experienced educational evaluator, his expertise can virtually be anticipated to lead the design and implementation of the evaluation with full cooperation of district officials. The competent evaluator should be given full authority and responsibility for program recommendations. The wise evaluator, however, will always realize his position as just that--one of an evaluator. While he may have full authority for making recommendations, it is ultimately the project director who must make the final decision and implementation. The third decision-making point, after the state and district-level staff, is the school principal. For internal purposes, this is the crucial one for process decision making. The personal characteristics of both the principal and the evaluator come into play heavily at this point. If the evaluator has demonstrated competence and at the same time is able to project a low-key but cooperative profile, he can probably emerge as a key person in program operation and changes in emphasis. In the hierarchy of politics of evaluation, the program evaluator's influence can probably be the most deeply felt in his day-to-day relationship with the project operating staff. The evaluator would be well advised to content himself with successes at this end.[5]

In a secondary school district or a unified school district including both elementary and secondary schools, the principal is given considerable autonomy in the operation of the programs within his or her school. In this type of evaluation which deals with Title I or School Improvement programs, the principal of the school as the primary site administrator in

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[4]Popham, W. J., Education Evaluation, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1975.

[5]Foster, P. V., Handbook in Vocational Education Evaluation, Bryan, Texas: Demand Publishing Co., 1979.

fact is responsible for everything that goes on within the confines of his domain. If he then finds himself as the leader of a group of people involved in a categorically funded program, it obviously behooves the competent and conscientious administrator to have some knowledge of evaluation although, as previously mentioned, he would hopefully have a good evaluator who would ultimately do the actual collection of data. Nevertheless, the principal in today's school system definitely needs some knowledge of what is going on in the field of evaluation since it is almost assured that he or she will eventually become the head of a school involved in a categorically funded program.

This relates to the nature of large city school districts where principals are rotated periodically to give them knowledge of the entire city and the community which they serve and to broaden their perspectives. Therefore, given the fact that an aspiring administrator or presently situated administrator will, in fact, become involved in a state or federal program during his or her career, there are a minimum of ten basic areas in which this person should have, if not expertise, at least detailed knowledge of what is being discussed and a basic concept of how to approach the area; to wit:

1. Evaluation Design: The design of the evaluation in many federal/state programs is very well circumscribed by government regulations. However, within the broad regulations there is considerable latitude as to how to establish the objectives of the program, what levels to set the objectives, how to measure the objectives, and things of that nature. Therefore, the basic concept of what an evaluation design entails should be in the tool kit of school principals. Also, it might be noted that some school district have developed well designed "inhouse" evaluation reports that go far beyond the basic requirements.

2. Needs Assessment: In order to establish the goals or the objectives of the school, it is first necessary to establish what the needs are. Therefore, a principal needs to understand the methods of collecting data to establish these needs. This might be through questionnaires, informal interviews with teachers and parents in any number of methods. This is basically a site responsibility and should be conducted by the site administrator or by the site administrator's staff under his direction.

3. Goal Setting: Closely related to the needs assessment is the establishment of the level of performance to be expected from students in the school. Different schools, being in diverse parts of a large city, clearly draw from different populations. The expectancy in one part of the city due to socio-economic factors and other considerations might be considerably different from another part of the city. The principal, therefore, must be attuned to the situation in which he finds himself so that he may know how to set realistic goals for his school, ultimately to be evaluated, but he must also be cognizant that he should not be content with the existing situation, but should continually strive to upgrade the performance of his students. He therefore must know how to establish a realistic level of expectancy.

4. Objectives: Objectives are one of the basic keys to any evaluation. They provide the direction to which the program is going. For example,

the objective in reading might be that "sixth-grade youngsters on the average will achieve ten months' growth for ten months' instruction as measured by a norm-referenced test." The site administrator must know how to write a proper objective which includes all of the elements of the criterion level, who is to obtain it, to what degree, and under what conditions.

5. Sampling Techniques: The administrator should have a smattering of knowledge as to how and why sampling is done. For example, in any large school having perhaps 500 Title I target students, it is not reasonable to examine the records of each and every subject. Therefore, it is incumbent to establish a valid method of sampling through various class levels, various techniques of random selection, and so on. Site administrator should definitely understand how and why the evaluator samples students or classrooms as he does.

6. Philosophy of Evaluation: The administrator should understand why projects are being evaluated. They, of course, are being evaluated because of a mandate from the funding source; however, there is much more to it than that. Hopefully, the competent evaluator employed by a good school district will try to enhance the program within the schools to which he is assigned, and his evaluation itself will become part and parcel of the total instructional process. The administrator needs to understand the basic philosophy that evaluation consists of more than just completing a few state forms at the end of the year and saying that is that. It is, in fact, supposed to provide day-to-day or weekly or monthly feedback to the school on the progress of the educational program in relation to students.

7. Student Progress: Analogous to this, how does evaluation relate to student progress? Do principals understand that it enhances student progress? How can it be utilized in this direction? How can the evaluator assist the school, assist the teachers, and assist the administrators who ultimately will assist the students?

8. Testing: Testing is a vital part of any program receiving outside funding. It is a part of our society, we might say, where we measure one person against another or we establish standards to which people should aspire. For example, all students in the United States might be tested on a given reading test and we might determine that the mean score is 30. Therefore, if there was a valid sample of all students, we could reasonably assume that 30 was what would be expected of an "average" student and this is what is called a norm-referenced or standardized test. These are required by all funding agencies, and in addition to that, most school districts have testing programs of their own, aside from categorical funding. Therefore, it is quite necessary that the site administrator understand what testing is about, how to interpret the results, and how to read the computer printouts depicting those results.

9. Computer Printouts: They come in various forms, often difficult for the lay person to understand, and in this sense we are calling the site administrator a lay person because, after all, he is not normally a professional evaluator. These printouts have the student's name, student's test score, and oftentimes the same test score compared with how the student

did a year previously so the growth or the nongrowth may be determined immediately. The site administrator must understand these pieces of student data that are given to him in order to interpret them for planning, for the faculty, or for the parents.

10. Record Keeping: Record keeping is essential to evaluation. The teacher should not be burdened with excessive record keeping; however, it is clearly impossible to measure student progress without record keeping; it is also impossible for the evaluator to determine the attainment of objectives without some records to examine. Therefore, the principal must establish within his or her school a system of record keeping that is simple yet adequate to perform the task, not only assisting with evaluation, but even more importantly, assisting the teacher in her instruction of the children and having an adequate record of each child's progress.

Summary

We have attempted to show the need for some knowledge on the part of school administrators relative to evaluation techniques. We have also tried to emphasize the desirability of a close and harmonious working relationship between evaluator and administrator. Apropos of the former point is a quote from a recent work in the field of career education:

> "As a consequence of this growing emphasis on accountability and career education, career education project directors and practitioners need to become familiar with the evaluation measures and materials that are most appropriate to their particular circumstances."[6]

This view is expressed by a national figure in the field of career education. Its inherent meaning is valid for all fields of publicly supported education. In this arena, the term "accountability" should mean "a willingness to evaluate educational programs objectively and express the results to the public with candor." Towards this end, the evaluationwise administrator can be of immeasurable help.

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[6]McCaslin, N. L. et al., Career Education Measures: A Compendium of Evaluation Instruments, Columbus, Ohio: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1979.